JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
COMMERCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate

January 31, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
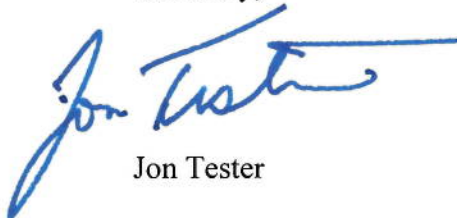S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

I write today to urge you to address the pressing needs of community health centers and hospitals in any upcoming government funding legislation. Congress has failed in its most basic duty to provide budgetary certainty to the American people. This inexcusable failure is hurting the hospitals and clinics that keep Montana's rural and medically underserved communities healthy. It is long past time to fix this uncertainty, which is threatening the health of my constituents.

On September 30, the Community Health Center Fund, the National Health Service Corps, the Teaching Health Centers program, and the Medicare low-volume adjustment for small hospitals expired—and Congress failed to act. Then on December 31, Medicare add-on payments for rural ambulance and home health services expired—and Congress failed to act. Then on January 1, the Administration took an axe to the 340B Drug Program—and again, Congress failed to act. Piecemeal, short-term patches for some of these lifelines have not saved Montana's clinics, hospitals, and the patients they serve from workforce challenges, deliberations about scaling back services, or concerns about closing their doors for good.

Congress must act now. Any bill you bring before Congress to address government funding should address these issues and provide long-term certainty. We cannot keep kicking this can down the road and crossing our fingers that rural hospitals and clinics can survive. The patients and rural communities who rely on them deserve far better than that.

Sincerely,

Jon Tester

BOZEMAN
(406) 586–4450

BUTTE
(406) 723–3277

GLENDIVE
(406) 365–2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452–9585

HELENA
(406) 449–5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257–3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252–0550

MISSOULA
(406) 728–3003